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THE BEGGAR'S OPERA

CARICATURES

BY

POWYS EVANS

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THE BEGGAR'S OPERA
CARICATURES



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CARICATURES

BY

POWYS EVANS

LONDON

CECIL PALMER

OAKLEY HOUSE, 14/18 BLOOMSBURY STREET W.C.1

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FIRST
EDITION
1922
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JOHN GAY

Author of *THE BEGGAR'S OPERA*

THIS contemporary with Pope, Swift, and other celebrated geniusses, was the descendant of an ancient family that had long been in possession of the manor of Goldworthy, in Devonshire, and was born in 1688, at or near Barnstaple. Being sent to the school of that town, a little before he retired from it he published a volume of Latin and English Poems; but, having no hereditary riches, he was sent to London, and apprenticed to a silk mercer. Here, it seems, he soon became weary of the restraint, or what he might deem the servility, of his situation; however, his master was easily persuaded to release him from any obligation, and in 1712 he got into the service of the Duchess of Monmouth as her secretary. The year following he published his *Rural Sports*, and inscribed it to Mr. Pope, then rising fast into reputation. Pope, when he became acquainted with Gay, found such attractions in his manners and conversation, that a friendship was formed between them, which lasted till their separation by death. In the following year he published *The Shepherds' Week*, six English pastorals, in which the images are drawn from real life, as it appears in remote parts of England; and these pastorals were read as just representations of rural manners and occupations. In 1713 he brought out his comedy of the *Wife of Bath*; but as this received no applause, he printed it; and seventeen years after, having, as he supposed, adapted it more to the public taste, he again offered it for the stage; but had the mortification of seeing it rejected, even while he was flushed with the success of his *Beggar's Opera*. In the last year of Queen Anne, Gay was appointed secretary to the Earl of Clarendon, ambassador to the Court of Hanover.

In 1717, he brought out *Three Weeks after Marriage*, a comedy written to ridicule Dr. Woodward, the *Fossilist*, a

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man not really or justly contemptible: and the performers were driven off the stage. Gay, after this, falling into dejection, the Earl of Burlington sent him into Devonshire, and the year after 1717 Mr. Pulteney took him to Aix: in the following year Lord Harcourt invited him to his seat, where, during his visit, two rural lovers were killed with lightning; the particulars of which are related in Pope's Letters. In 1720, he published his poems by subscription with such success, that he raised a thousand pounds; but afterwards engaging in a dangerous speculation in the South Sea scheme, he was again reduced so low, that his life was in danger. Being again restored to health, his awkwardness and simplicity exposed him to the laugh of the town, on account of his falling down and overturning a screen, when sent for to read the play of the Captives before the Princess of Wales and her attendants. In 1726, he wrote Fables for the young Duke of Cumberland. In 1727, having refused the offer of being made gentleman usher to the Princess Louisa, all the interest of his friends to move the court in his favour after this proved unavailing.—All the pain, however, which he suffered from the neglect of the court is supposed to have been driven away by the unexampled success of *The Beggar's Opera*. Besides being acted in London sixty-three days without interruption, and renewed the next season with equal applause, it spread into all the great towns of England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland. Ladies' fans, and the screens in the houses, bore the favourite songs of this opera, and even the person who performed Polly was raised from obscurity. Gay, too much elated by this success, produced a second part, under the title of *Polly*; but this the Lord Chamberlain very properly refused to licence: but for this hardship he found a recompense in the affectionate attention of the Duke and Duchess of Queensberry, into whose house he was taken. He died of a violent fit of the cholic, in December, 1732, and was buried in Westminster Abbey, where his generous patrons erected a monument to his memory



M^r GAY

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CLAUD LOVAT FRASER.

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NIGEL PLAYFAIR.

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FREDERICK AUSTIN.

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1474
E8A43



"THEN, INDEED, WE MUST COMPLY WITH
THE CUSTOMS OF THE WORLD, AND MAKE
GRATITUDE GIVE WAY TO INTEREST."

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"THE WENCH IS MARRIED, HUSBAND."

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BUY YOURSELF WEEDS, AND BE CHEERFUL."

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"WAS EVER SUCH AN UNFORTUNATE RASCAL
AS I AM?"

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"IF POVERTY BE A TITLE TO POBTRY, I
AM SURE NOBODY CAN DISPUTB MINE."

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"WHY THEN, FRIEND, THIS IS A DOWNRIGHT
DEEP TRAJEDY."

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"ART THOU THEN MARRIED TO ANOTHER?
HAST THOU TWO WIVES, MONSTER?"

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"NOW I'M A WRETCH INDEED."

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"I WAS ALWAYS VERY CURIOUS IN MY LIQUORS."

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"'TIS NOT CONVENIENT, SIR, TO SHOW MY
FONDNESS AMONG SO MANY RIVALS."

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LIST OF CARICATURES

MR. GAY

CLAUD LOVAT FRASER

NIGEL PLAYFAIR

FREDERICK AUSTIN

CHARACTERS

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. PEACHUM | <i>Scott Russell</i> |
| 2. LOCKIT | <i>Tristan Rawson</i> |
| 3. MacHEATH | <i>Frederick Ranalow</i> |
| 4. THE BEGGAR | <i>Arnold Pilbeam</i> |
| 5. FILCH, AS THE PLAYER | <i>Frederick Davies</i> |
| 6. MRS. PEACHUM | <i>Elsie French</i> |
| 7. POLLY PEACHUM | <i>Vivian Roberts</i> |
| 8. LUCY LOCKIT | <i>Violet Marguesita</i> |
| 9. MRS. TRAPES | <i>Beryl Freeman</i> |
| 10. JENNY DIVER | <i>Angela Badderly</i> |

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